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**GOVERNOR APPLAUDS FIRST 5 CALIFORNIA FOR BRINGING
STATE ONE STEP CLOSER TOWARD PROVIDING HEALTH ACCESS TO ALL
YOUNG CHILDREN**

Legislative Leaders Join in Commending Historic Investment

(Sacramento, CA) – In an important step toward providing health coverage for all of California's youngest children, Governor Schwarzenegger today joined with First 5 California to announce its commitment to invest \$20 million in a statewide health care program. This funding will help provide health access to all uninsured children ages 0 to 5, making California among the first states in the nation to cover all young children.

"First 5 is doing a remarkable job of helping and supporting our children. Putting up \$20 million for health care for children is an important foundation to build on," said Governor Schwarzenegger at a press conference held earlier today at the Capitol. "We all have to work together to provide health care not only for all children, but for all Californians."

Legislative leaders joined the Governor as well as local children's advocates, parents, pediatricians, community and faith leaders at the Capitol to urge lawmakers to continue working toward comprehensive health reform legislation this year.

"I applaud First 5's commitment and leadership in expanding health care coverage for children," Senate President pro Tem Don Perata said. "This is just one example of their ongoing support for the future of children in California."

Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez congratulated First 5 California's State Commission for unanimously approving the funding resolution and helping move the state closer to a solution.

"I commend First 5 California for planting the seeds for an expanded health care system that covers all of California's children," said Speaker Núñez.

California has 174,000 uninsured children under age six, according to the California Health Interview Survey conducted by the University of California, Los Angeles.

Studies conducted by The California Endowment have shown uninsured children are 70 percent less likely than insured children to receive medical care for common conditions such as ear infections, and 30 percent less likely to receive medical attention when they are injured. Further, children without health coverage are often ill, hindering their ability to pay attention in class and keep up with school activities.

“We are proud to help lead the way in protecting the most vulnerable among us – our children,” said Kris Perry, executive director of First 5 California. “First 5 California’s investment will help lay the foundation for an expansive health coverage system that will improve the lives of thousands of young children statewide and end the worry for their parents and caregivers.”

The \$20 million contribution by First 5 California is contingent upon the state establishing a health coverage program for all children effective January 1, 2008. The newly-developed program must provide for ongoing funding beyond First 5 California’s 2007-08 commitment.

The California Senate Appropriations Committee estimates that approximately \$100 million is needed to implement a statewide program that will effectively cover all of California’s children.

“We look forward to working with our state’s leaders to help secure a healthy future for all our children,” Perry said.

This announcement builds on First 5 California’s efforts over the past four years to provide all of California’s youngest children with health coverage. Along with many county commissions, First 5 California has supported children’s health insurance through Children’s Health Initiatives (CHIs) and Healthy Kids programs. First 5 California has also invested tens of millions of dollars in projects aimed at improving the health of young children, such as providing asthma education to families, increasing access to dental care and screening children for special needs and disabilities.

ABOUT FIRST 5 CALIFORNIA

Research shows that a child’s brain develops most dramatically in the first five years and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child’s growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. Based on this research, First 5 California, also known as the California Children and Families Commission, was established after voters passed Proposition 10 in November 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to fund education, health, child care and other programs for expectant parents and children ages 0 to 5. For more information on First 5 California, visit www.first5california.com.

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